

NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



BULTJE ATTENDS GOVERNOR NOEM'S 2019 PRIORITIES TOUR

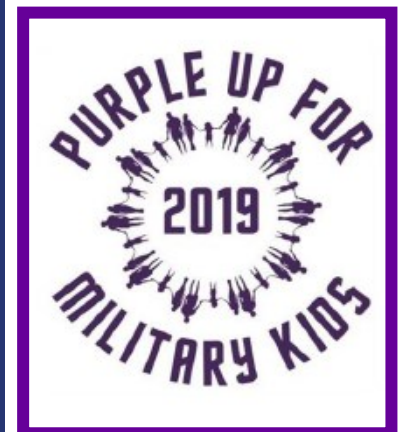
SDDVA Program Manager Erin Bultje attended Governor Kristi Noem's 2019 Priorities Tour today in Sioux Falls.

The tour, sponsored by the Sioux Falls Area Chamber of Commerce, was held at the Holiday Inn Sioux Falls City Centre.

Gov. Noem shared her priorities for her first year in office, discussed issues of importance to the state and answered questions from the audience. She noted that as every piece of legislation crosses her desk she asks "how will this bill impact the next generation?"

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VA'S PROPOSED RULES FOR VETERAN COMMUNITY CARE NOW OPEN FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announced the publication of a proposed regulation in the [Federal Register](#) for the new [Veterans community care program, including access standards](#).

The proposed regulation would establish new rules for the veterans community care program required by section 101 of the [VA Maintaining Internal Systems and Strengthening Integrated Outside Networks Act \(MISSION Act\)](#) of 2018.

Last month, VA Secretary Robert Wilkie announced its proposed access standards for community care and urgent care provisions that will take effect in June and guide when veterans can seek care to meet their needs under the MISSION Act – be it with VA or with community providers.

Under the MISSION Act, signed by President Trump in June 2018, there are six different eligibility criteria for community care:

- Services unavailable
- Residence in a State without a full-service VA medical facility
- 40-mile legacy/grandfathered from the Choice program
- Access standards
- Best medical interest
- Needing care from a VA medical service line that VA determines is not providing care that complies with VA's standards for quality.

The VA is proposing new access standards, effective when the final regulations publish (expected in June 2019), to ensure veterans have greater choice in receiving care. Eligibility criteria and final standards as follows were based on VA's analysis of all of the best practices both in government and in the private sector and tailored to the needs of our veteran patients:

- Access standards will be based on average drive time and appointment wait times.
- For primary care, mental health, and non-institutional extended care services, VA is proposing a 30-minute average drive time standard.
- For specialty care, the VA is proposing a 60-minute average drive time standard.

The VA is proposing appointment wait-time standards of 20 days for primary care, mental health care, and non-institutional extended care services, and 28 days for specialty care from the date of request with certain exceptions.

Proposed Rules for Veteran Community Care Open for Public Comment

VA's proposed Federal regulation would establish new rules for the Veterans community care program as required by the VA MISSION Act of 2018.

(continued)

PROPOSED RULES (CONTINUED)

Eligible veterans who cannot access care within those standards would be able to choose between eligible community providers and care at a VA medical facility.

VA Secretary Robert Wilkie said, “Our medical services must meet our veterans’ needs and reinforce the trust that forms the basis for every interaction with the VA. Our new access standards are a vital part of this effort.

“Most Americans can already choose the health care providers that they trust, and President Trump promised that veterans would be able to do the same. With the VA’s new access standards, the future of the VA health care system will lie in the hands of veterans – exactly where it should be.”

Secretary Wilkie’s full statement from Jan. 28 [is available here](#).

The proposed regulation (RIN 2900-AQ46) is currently available online at <https://federalregister.gov/d/2019-03030>.

The proposed regulation was scheduled to be published in the Federal Register Feb. 22, and the VA encourages the public to provide input on the proposed regulation by March 25, 2019, during the public comment period. For instructions on how to submit a comment, visit the Federal Register website at www.regulations.gov and search for RIN 2900-AQ46.

SDDVA MINI CONFERENCES

SDDVA will be holding the annual mini conferences May 7-9 in Rapid City, Pierre and Sioux Falls respectively. Conferences will run from 10:00 am—3:00 pm at each location.

Topics of the training include: National Guard/VA Benefits, Appeals Modernization Act, Nuts and Bolts of what is in the 38 CFR, How to use the 38 CFR, and Hot Topics.

Meeting sites are as follows:

May 7

TREA (1981 Centre Street)—Rapid City

May 8

Post 8 American Legion (520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre

May 9

VFW (3601 S. Minnesota Avenue)—Sioux Falls



Save the date!

BIG SHOUT OUT TO CLAY COUNTY VSO ADEN

Many counties have a “wall of honor” to salute their heroes. But Clay County was home to a “room of honor,” a room that had over 800 Clay County veterans’ photos displayed on the walls.

Due to space management issues, the County needed the room for another office. Many might have just packed up the photos and put them in storage, but not Clay County VSO Cynthia Aden. Aden found an innovative way to continue to have their heroes stories available to all. She has developed a slideshow of the photos and their story. The slideshow is searchable and as of today Aden has 570 of the photos loaded.



The slideshow allows Aden to add or update the story for each veteran about their service.

Aden has a kiosk by her office so visitors can view the slideshow, but it is also accessible from home. Visit their link: <https://claycountyveterans.ericksonwebsites.com/>.

Aden noted It was not too expensive, difficult, or time consuming and she challenges all veterans service officers to provide a similar display to honor heroes.

SDDVA salutes Aden for her innovation and applauds her for the challenge she has delivered to county and tribal veterans service officers. This might be a great opportunity for a summer intern!

NATIONAL/STATE VIETNAM WAR RECOGNITION DAYS

March 29 has been designated as National Vietnam War Veterans Day – a time for all Americans to come together to remember and honor the service and sacrifice of Vietnam Veterans.

As commemorative partners, the Sioux Falls VA Health Care System and Dakotas Regional Office invite Vietnam and Vietnam Era Veterans to a reception from 4:00-6:00 p.m. in the front foyer. There will be a very brief program at about 4:00 p.m. with presentation of lapel pins, music, and refreshments in addition to information tables for veterans to find out about all the services the VA has available for them.

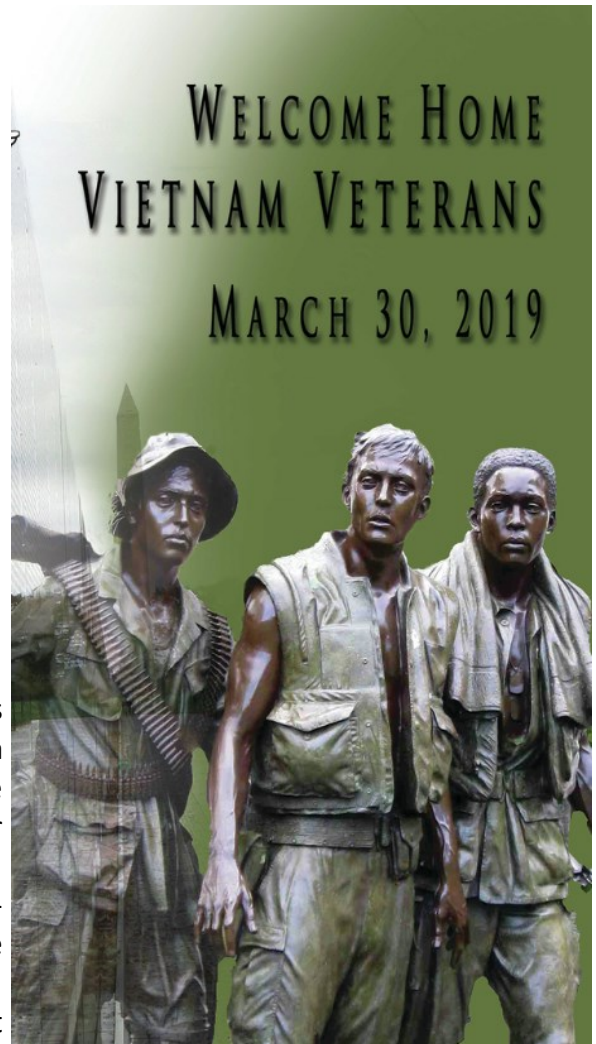
In addition, DAV Chapter 1, Military Order of the Purple Heart, and Vietnam Veterans of America will host an open house from 1:00-3:30 p.m. at the DAV in Sioux Falls where veterans can share their memorabilia. At 3:00 p.m., a Ho Chi Minh Trail program will take place, with a speaker discussing a 550 bike expedition on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The public is invited.

In addition Vietnam and Era Veterans are invited to a reunion at Deadwood Gulch in Deadwood April 26-28. For more information, call 605-645-0055 or 605-303-0444. As part of their program, a Vietnam Memorial will be dedicated at the Black Hills National Cemetery at 20901 Pleasant Valley Dr., Sturgis, on Saturday, April 27, at 10:00 a.m.

Governor Kristi Noem has proclaimed March 30, 2019, as “Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day” in South Dakota, a day to pay tribute to the fallen, the missing, the wounded, the millions who served, and the millions more who awaited their return.

More than 27,000 South Dakotans served valiantly under difficult circumstances during the Vietnam War and 210 made the ultimate sacrifice.

The Vietnam War is a story of service members of different backgrounds, races, and creeds who came together to complete a daunting mission. It is a story of Americans from every corner of our Nation who left the warmth of family to serve the country they loved. It is a story of patriots who braved the line of fire, who cast themselves into harm’s way to save a friend, who fought hour after hour, day after day to preserve the liberties we hold dear.



SDNG RECEIVES ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

The South Dakota Army National Guard received a 2018 Environmental Security Award for outstanding program and initiatives in environmental excellence, Feb. 12.

The SDARNG's Construction and Facilities Management Office received a third place finish in the Team/Individual - Sustainability Award category for significant progress in implementing environmentally responsible practices.

The award was presented by the Army National Guard at the Professional Education Center at Camp Robinson in Little Rock, Arkansas, during the Fiscal Year 2019 Program Guidance Course.

The CFMO's Sustainability Team is charged with maintaining compliance and improving sustainable management throughout the state. Their gains in diversion and compliance have saved the SDARNG in disposal costs, generated recycling revenue, and avoided costly censures or impediments to training.

The Sustainability Team is also working with the community to help achieve their goals. By integrating community outreach into their efforts, the team has fostered volunteerism and donations to get new projects off the ground.

Other sustainment initiatives that are having an impact with the assistance of SDARNG units include inspections, compliance and accountability in support of the Environmental Performance Assessment System; enhanced spill control and prevention training; workspace evaluations to identify facility risks and liabilities; collaboration on hazardous materials planning, and assistance visits to find unconventional solutions in communities with limited recycling vendors.

Over the past two years, this team has achieved outstanding, measurable results - as it has pursued waste stream reduction, increased waste diversion, compliance training improvement, and systems management. A vibrant program of community outreach and public education also distinguishes the team's strategies.



(L to R) Matraysia Punderson, Lt. Col. Tom Nelson and Emily Beck

VA TO ACCELERATE CLAIMS FOR PURPLE HEART RECIPIENTS

This week at a congressional hearing VA Secretary Robert Wilkie announced that effective in April, it will provide priority disability benefits claims processing for the initial claims from discharged combat veterans who have been awarded the Purple Heart Medal.

Secretary Wilkie announced his decision at a hearing before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Military Construction, Veterans Affairs, and Related Agencies.

“Those who hold the Purple Heart, the recognition of wounds taken in battle, will now receive priority consideration when it comes to claims before the United States Department of Veterans Affairs,” said Secretary Wilkie.

The Veterans Benefits Administration will amend its priority processing categories to include initial claims received from Purple Heart recipients on or after April 1, 2019.

Purple Heart recipients are already treated on a priority basis at VA hospitals and are exempt from co-payments for their medical care.

The Purple Heart award is the oldest U.S. military decoration and is awarded to U.S. service members for wounds suffered at the hands of the enemy. General George Washington awarded the first purple-colored heart-shaped badges to soldiers who fought in the Continental Army during the American Revolution. In 1932, it was revived to commemorate Washington’s 200th birthday.

BIG SHOUT OUT TO THE RAPID CITY COMMUNITY

A Big “SHOUT OUT” to “Visit Rapid City.” Visit Rapid City, a community-based organization promoting their community, recognizes that keeping close ties between the community and those connected with the military is key, and part of that is offering military discounts.

They have put together some window clings that say ‘military and veterans discounts are here.’ There are over 200 businesses in Rapid City that offer discounts to active duty military and veterans. The new clings let military members and their families and veterans know they are welcome in the community.

The full list of businesses that offer military discounts can be found at.

<https://www.newscenter1.tv/local-businesses-aim-to-strengthen-ties-between-community-military-members-with-discounts/>



UPCOMING EVENTS

Mar 3—NSIC/Sanford Basketball Championship Military Appreciation Day—Sanford Pentagon—Sioux Falls
Mar 3-7—VFW Legislative Conference—Washington, DC
Mar 6—VABHHCS Art Show—Building 145—Classroom 108—Ft. Meade—1:00 pm to 4:00 pm (MT)
Mar 8—VABHHCS VSO Congressional Forum—VFW Post 1273 (420 Main Street—Rapid City)—10:00 am (MT)
Mar 12—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Ft Meade (Building 145—Room 239) 1:00 pm—3:00 pm (MT)
Mar 13—VABHHCS Art Show—Hot Springs Domiciliary Auditorium—1:00 to 4:00 pm (MT)
Mar 20—South Dakota Veterans Council meeting—PVA Headquarters—Sioux Falls—10:00 am (CT)
Mar 26—VABHHCS Whole Health Program—Hot Springs (Building 12—Room A002) 10:00 am—12:00 pm (MT)
Mar 29—Vietnam Veterans Open House—DAV Headquarters—Sioux Falls—1:00—3:00 pm (CT)
Mar 29—Vietnam/Vietnam Era Veterans Reception—SFVAHCS Front Foyer—4:00 pm—6:00 pm (CT)
Mar 30—Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day in South Dakota
Apr 6—State MOPH Convention—Rapid City DAV (101 E. Madison Street) - 1:00 pm (MT)
Apr 19—State Offices Closed
Apr 22—State Offices Closed
May 7—SDDVA Mini Conference—TREA (1981 Centre Street)—Rapid City—10:00 am—3:00 pm (MT)
May 8—SDDVA Mini Conference—Post 8 American Legion (520 S. Pierre Street)—Pierre—10:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
May 9—SDDVA Mini Conference—VFW (3601 S. Minnesota Avenue)—Sioux Falls—10:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)
May 14—Bill Casper's Annual WW II Luncheon—TREA—Rapid City
May 17—Veterans Honor Concert—State Veterans Home—Hot Springs—2:00 pm (MT)
May 17-19—DAV Convention—Hilton Garden Inn (5300 S. Grand Circle) —Sioux Falls
May 27—MJFSVH Memorial Day Car Show—Hot Springs—2:00 pm (MT)
Jun 13-16—VFW State Convention—Dakota State University—Madison
July 20-24—National VFW Convention—Orlando, FL
Aug 26-29—SDDVA Benefit School



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South Dakota Department of the Military <http://military.sd.gov>

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